

Living Life Alive – Beyond Healing to the Healer
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Scripture Reading:

John 5:1-16

¹ Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. ² Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. ³ Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. —and they waited for the moving of the waters. ⁴ From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease they had. ⁵ One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” ⁷ “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.” ⁸ Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” ⁹ At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, ¹⁰ and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.” ¹¹ But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’” ¹² So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?” ¹³ The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. ¹⁴ Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well. ¹⁶ So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him.

Hello, I'm Brad Shellenberg, Lead Pastor at Parkview. In our time in the Word of God we will be continuing our sermon series from the gospel of John, and today we are looking at the first portion of chapter 5. If you have a Bible, I encourage you to open it up, to refer to as we walk through the first 16 verses.

Before we go there, I would like to share with you that I am looking forward to the fall and the start-up of ministries at Parkview. When news of Covid reached us in early March, everything seemed to come to a screeching halt, and we scrambled to figure out how we could possibly do any of the things we had easily done before.

Since then we have done lots of learning about where and how businesses can still operate, how social interactions can still take place, and we pray now, how student education can still occur.

This fall will look different for the church, for sure, but we are making plans for ministries to take place. God is able to make us able to navigate life, no matter what the situation around us looks like.

When things around us get incredibly difficult, God supplies even more incredible grace. Of all the things God tells us we need to do, the one He says most is “Do not be afraid”.

So, I am hopeful. God is working all around us, all the time. And in these days of disruption that have fallen on the entire human race, God is doing things to grow His kingdom life in people, in ways we've never seen before.

If you are a follower of Jesus, keep praying, keep in the Word of God, keep loving and serving others in Jesus' name. He and His church are alive and well.

Alright, John chapter 5. The account John recorded was when Jesus visited an area of Jerusalem where there was a pool called Bethesda. At this pool people with physical maladies would gather, believing that there were healing properties in the water of the pool.

When Jesus heals one of the men at the pool of his physical ailment several things were set in motion. One was the man's learning about and experiencing the power of the Lord Jesus. That is the part I would like to focus on today.

I believe John also records this miracle as part of the continuing story of the rejection by the Jewish people Jesus had come to rescue. John had started his gospel telling us chapter 1 . . .

John 1:10-12

¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

His own that He came to, were the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But when the leaders of the Jewish people learned that a man who had been lame for 38 years had been healed, there was no rejoicing in this great good that had occurred. They did not thank God for His merciful gift.

In verse 16, we are told that because it was on a sabbath day that Jesus had told the man to carry the mat he had been lying on, the Jewish leaders began to persecute Jesus. There was no openness to seeing Jesus for who He was and receiving Him. His own did not receive Him.

If you were with us for the look last week at the two miracles of turning water into wine or the healing of the royal official's son, this account is quite different. Here there is no request made of Jesus for his intervention. He offers a complete healing to him, before the man even knows that's a possibility.

Let's look at the miracle and the man who was healed. If you were looking closely at the Scriptures as they were being read, most of you would have noticed that verse 4 does not appear in your translation of the Bible. And if it does, it is likely in brackets with a footnote about the verse. The text of verse 3-4 reads . . .

John 5:3-4

—and they waited for the moving of the waters. ⁴From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease they had.

These words are not found in any known manuscripts of the gospel dated earlier than the fourth century. It is most likely a parenthetical note added by a copyist to inform the readers of the tradition of belief about the waters which would bubble up from time to time.

Was this pool really a provision of God to mend broken human bodies, and was it a fact that the first one in was always healed? It's hard to know with absolute certainty. What was believed then about this pool formed the basis of the sad answer the lame man gave to Jesus.

John 5:7

⁷ “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

This man was in a bad place. He had been lame for almost four decades, and now he was found without help from others and putting his hope on the waters of this pool.

Time after time, when something happened to move the waters, hope would spring up in all those sitting around waiting. And then it was every man for himself. The mad dash to get in the water would begin.

It didn't seem to matter to them who most needed the healing, or who had suffered the most from their ailment. Every time it would be the most able bodied that would be able to scurry quickest into the pool. And this man was always the loser of that race.

But this day, the man was to learn that there is something better than experiencing a miracle of physical healing – it is to know the One who heals. It is to be in a relationship with the God who continually heals and one day will completely heal every sickness, disease, condition, weakness, and even mortality itself.

As I read through these verses numerous times, there were three phrases that caught my attention. These I would like to share with you to consider. The first phrase was . . .

• **Jesus saw him lying there**

John 5:6

⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

Jesus saw the man. He noticed him and focused his attention on him.

At times it may seem like it was almost a different lifetime ago, but there are some things I remember about the days we lived in Saskatoon and being parents of toddlers and preschoolers. I remember our children wanting us to watch them. Watch me do this, and watch me do this, and this.

They so much wanted to be seen. And now I smile in amusement as I see our grandchildren doing the exact same thing, clamoring for the focus of their parents. One of our dear little ones must not only have his parents watch what he does, but he insists his stuffed animal must observe him too.

To be seen means so much to us. Jesus saw Him. He focused His attention on Him. He may have been invisible to those around him, but Jesus saw Him. And when Jesus saw Him and focused His attention on Him, it was with the intention of showing this man the mercy of God.

It reminds me of the story of a woman named Hagar (Genesis 16). She was the servant of another woman named Sarah, who was the wife of a man named Abraham. After Sarah told Abraham to

have a child for her by having a child with Hagar, the relationship of Sarah and her servant turned very sour.

Hagar ran away from her master and as such was left out in the open wilderness without a tent to live in and without food to feed her and her son. Now she was one of those invisibles, with no-one to care for her. But God saw her. And He sent the angel of the Lord to encourage her and give her a unique promise for her and her son.

Genesis 16:13 records Hagar's response to God seeing her with mercy.

Genesis 16:13

¹³ She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me."

It's when we think we are most invisible and uncared for that we understand most clearly that God sees us. And in His eyes, there is mercy. Jesus saw him lying there.

The second phrase that most of us get caught on is Jesus' question to the man . . .

• **"Do you want to get well?"**

At first hearing we wonder about the question. Why wouldn't he want to get well? Who wouldn't want to be set free from being an invalid after 38 years?

Well, first, in some strange way, it was about comfort and predictability. Did the man really want to go to work to support himself?

To be able-bodied would be to accept new responsibilities of serving an employer or building up a business. And then he would have to pay taxes, instead of just receiving charity. Some who survived by begging for hand-outs actually had plenty to take care of their immediate physical needs.

Secondly, when Jesus proposed wellness to this man, He had much more in mind than taking away this present physical limitation and any associated pain it came with. The Lord would ask of him if he also wanted to get right with God and make his soul healthy.

We see that in the next interaction with the man in the temple, when Jesus confronted the man with his sin problem, as Jesus could with anyone of us.

Did he really want to come clean spiritually and live in a new way for the glory of God? Did he really want to deal not just with this symbol of sin or was he prepared to do the real work of digging out the root of his life's brokenness. Many would like their trouble to go away without having to give thanks to God or worship or serve Him.

The gospel writer Luke, records Jesus words in chapter 5 . . .

Luke 5:31-32

³¹ Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

There are two soul blockades to us receiving the gift of grace from God – 1 is not recognizing we are sick. And number 2 is not wanting the cure.

I ask you. Do you want to get well? Completely, as God wants for you?

The third phrase that I paused at was Jesus' later words to the man in verse 14 . . .

• **“Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you”**

There is something worse than physical sickness, even worse than a lameness that leads a man into begging for bread for decades of his life.

One can be perfectly physically healthy, yet live with a sin-sick soul where natural selfishness causes greed, lust, cold-heartedness, that sucks all the life and joy from us and makes all our relationships seem like work, or worse yet destroys them.

And then there's the problem of meeting God one day without our sins being dealt with by faith in Jesus' work on the cross. Even if we have physical and mental health until we die at 101, if for eternity there is not light and goodness, but rather forever darkness and suffering, all will be lost in the end.

Jesus wanted the man to know that there are worse things than chronic sickness and pain. There is living all of this life and the next with a soul never brought to life by Jesus.

Where does this passage of Scripture leave us today? First . . .

Set your eyes on the One who heals.

. . . not on just a fix for your present biggest need. Like the poor man fixated on the water of the pool. That's the best he could hope for, that one day he would win the stirred water lottery. And that wasn't happening.

What are you facing and where are you placing all your hope?

In a doctor or science? Those can help but they are not the healer. They are not your healer.

Is your hope in medications to make you sleep or to make you more even keeled, or very dangerously, is your hope in alcohol or drugs to numb your pain away? They might bring some temporary feeling of relief, but they are not the healer.

Have you put your hope in your spouse or a close friend or some other person you're hope will come along? They might be able to help, but they are not your healer.

Is all your hope for a job that will be satisfying and secure? It can help, but it can never be your healer.

The lame man needed to take his eyes off the pool, and look up at the One who heals every disease and sickness of body and soul. You should do the same.

Walk in the ways of the Lord, so that the best happens to you.

Jesus told the man to stop sinning to avoid a life outside the protection of God, one that ultimately ends in standing before God to be judged by Him. At the same time, He was telling him to choose goodness and godliness to know the life of blessing from God.

The Apostle Paul told us in Romans 12:2 that God's will for us is good, pleasing and perfect. If we are living in ways that are anything less than what our Creator's design for life is, we are satisfying ourselves with far less than life fully alive.

To live on less than life fully alive is like sitting down at a table with a gourmet banquet meal on a plate in front of us, pushing the plate away and instead opening up a paper bag, pulling out half a hot-dog wiener that was nuked four days ago and eating that. God has so much more for you in His good, pleasing and perfect will.

If there are ways that you know that you are rejecting what God has called you to live, choosing rather in pride, to do it your own way. Hear this . . . "Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you".

When you confess your sins to God and make a change to obedience, I can promise you that God forgives and receives you. I can promise you that because God promised you that in His Word.

Who needs to be seen by you?

As followers of Jesus, we are His representatives in the world. We have not been rescued from darkness and hopelessness, merely to make us happy. We have received grace and blessing that we might be grace and blessing.

There are people all around us that are staring into a dark pool of water, hoping it will somehow make them whole, when the One who heals is the only One that can make enable them to live life fully alive.

This is why "mission" is one of our values at Parkview. It's why we continually call ourselves to look outside our church to other places in the world and to other people who have no hope of hearing about the One who heals.

It's why all of us, together as a church, and all of us as individuals need to look outside our own lives to let the people living around us know that there is One who makes people well. The healer sees them, too.

(Prayer of response)

(Benediction)

Psalm 103:2-4

² Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—

³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,

⁴ who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion